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Sen. Brown decries governor's treatment of St. Joseph County

LANSING – State Sen. Cameron Brown, R-Fawn River Township, today expressed disapproval of Gov. Jennifer Granholm's treatment of St. Joseph County after her administration announced an abrupt cancellation of the US-131 improvement project.

The decision not to proceed with the legislatively-approved project comes on the heels of the governor threatening to veto legislation intended to help border communities like those in St. Joseph County retain and attract quality jobs.

Suggested by St. Joseph County Economic Development Director David Allen, the bill would allow local units of government to offer property tax abatements to warehouse and distribution centers just as communities in Indiana and Ohio can.

"For the second time in as many days, the governor has dealt a painful blow to the people of St. Joseph County and especially the people of Constantine," Brown said.

The Michigan Department of Transportation announced at a meeting Thursday night the discontinuation of plans to expand and improve US-131 through the county, including a bypass around the village of Constantine.

Brown, who attended the public meeting, expressed his disappointment with the decision.

"Countless millions of taxpayer dollars have been expended preparing for this project," Brown said. "Residents have made critical decisions about their homes and businesses under the assumption that this critical infrastructure improvement was going to take place."

Brown has been actively involved with the project for more than six years, dating to his time serving in the House of Representatives.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Brown helped ensure the project was included in the last two MDOT budgets and has participated in numerous planning meetings to update local officials and residents.

"The people of St. Joseph County deserve to know why MDOT led them down this path only to abruptly abandon the project," Brown said. "Unfortunately, it looks like the governor thinks there are better places to spend money than in southern Michigan. I plan to seek answers directly from the transportation director and from the governor herself."

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